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THERE IS NO GOD BUT GOD

JESUS
AN IDEAL OF GODHEAD AND HUMANITY

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MUSLIM MISSION, WORKING

PUBLISHED BY
The Muslim Book Society
AZEEZ MANZIL LAHORE, (PUNJAB)

1920

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THE MANAGER, MUSLIM BOOK DEPOT, 10, BRYAN STREET,
AZEEZ MAZILLI, LAHORE,

(Punjab)

(IN PRESS.)

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JESUS, AN IDEAL OF GODHEAD AND HUMANITY.

LA ILAHA ILL-ALLAH.
(There is no god but God)

"THOU shalt have no gods before me," spoke the God of Israel to Moses, and imperative as the commandment was, it was honoured more in the breach than in the observance. In spite of the repeated warnings from God, the house of Israel went 'after other gods to serve them and worship them.' They could "incur the wrath of a jealous God," but they could not give up the worship of the 'graven image.' But Israel was not the worst of his kind, there were others as well amongst the various tribes and nations of the human race, scattered on the surface of the earth, who could find edification of their soul only in bowing before an image made by their own hands. Indians and Egyptians, Persians and Syrians, Romans and Greeks, in their turn, with all their culture and advancement, were found incapable of appreciating that high notion of worshipping one God, which some 4,000 years ago was

preached from the Mount of Sinai and re-echoed from the Mount of Olives. Even the Church of Christ in its early days could not keep its fold from falling into the old habit of bowing before images. Roman and Greek mythology crept into it, and the classical gods of ancient days found their place in its annals under Romish Canonisation, with change of name and place. Polytheism flourished in one garb or another, and kept its firm sway on the human mind till the advent of the last of the race of prophets, when it received its final death-blow in Arabia. It died to rise no more, and the unity of God was established for ever. The last word of God gave such a lucid exposition to Monotheism that, since then, even those who are still victims to polytheistic tendencies perforce own their belief in the oneness of God, and come with a plausible apology for their doing the contrary.

What was the conception of the divinity of Christ in its primitive stage, and what gradual changes it underwent subsequently, is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that the modern Christian mind has rejected all old theories, and has become too advanced to believe in a plurality of gods. In fact to speak now of Christians as believers in three gods, as they used to be in days past, is simply to betray one's ignorance of their belief in the light

of modernised Western theology. They, it is said, believe in One, and only One God, with the Lord Jesus as a Manifestation of that One and the same God.

THE INFINITE BEING.

An Infinite Being to be comprehended by finite man is an impossibility, and all that the unaided research of man can establish is : that there is some Power and an 'Infinite and Eternal Energy' from which all things proceed—a fact which even science and an agnostic cannot deny 'In our search for a cause we discover no resting place until we arrive at the hypothesis of a first cause, and we have no alternative but to regard the first cause as infinite and absolute'' But is this First Cause unknowable ? Is not Intelligence and Design observable in All His working ? Is it unlikely for Him to reveal some of His Characters to His Creatures which they could not of themselves find out, or is it impossible for Him to do so. To think otherwise would be " not only unphilosophical but absurd," says a Christian writer. " I ask you to examine, with calm, unprejudiced inquiry," he continues, " those historical facts and that inner character of Christianity which make Christians believe that the great First Cause has spoken to

mankind and revealed His character in Jesus Christ." If man is not a material product of purely material substance, and possesses, not only intellectual but moral forces, and if his morals are morals of a Personal God, whose image he is, is it not desirable that God should come in man as a prototype and perfect specimen for others' imitation, so that all our moral forces find their complete development? The unique figure of Christ, His spotless character, His life after death, the miracles He worked out, are some tangible points of God's character which, it is said, He has been pleased to reveal to mankind in the person of the blessed Son of the Holy Virgin.

This is what in our times has been apologetically advanced for Christian belief in the Godhead of Christ. I need not question the correctness of the premises given above, nor do I see the necessity of impeaching the genuineness of the Evangelical records they have been based upon. I accept them as they are, but do they lead to the conclusions arrived at? I am afraid I am constrained to remark that I do not see my way to answer in the affirmative.

MIRACLES AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS.

With the miracles and teachings of the Nazarene Prophet, as well as with His spotless character, and certain Self-glorifying utterances as the basis of His claims to Divinity, I will deal later on. Besides,

Jesus is not a unique character in this respect. History has not failed, to see others as well, in the person of some of the great men of the world, who can equally claim divinity on these basic lines. For the present I wish to meet the first ground, which appeals to me more than the other grounds, and, I must acknowledge, is not destitute of plausibility.

GOD AND JESUS.

Has God revealed His character in Jesus Christ? If to give full manifestation to His glory, God was pleased to take human birth and stooped to eat and drink like others, and suffered the consequences of His so doing, one cannot fail to find an apology if He betrays ordinary human weaknesses, and therefore I should not be so unreasonable as to expect 'God coming out of a woman's womb' to possess those transcendent superhuman attributes like Omniscience, Omnipresence and Omnipotence, which everywhere and in all times have been rightly considered as true essentials of Godhood. One must always bear in mind, it is argued, that the Son of Man was God, but in Man, and the glory of God and His attributes, therefore, had to receive their full epiphany within the four walls of humanity, and subject to the implacable tyrannies of Time and Space to which a help-

less creature like man has been victimised. No wonder, therefore, if the God incarnate lacked knowledge of many a thing ; His confessed ignorance of the exact time of the last day, of which only God the Father knew, and God the Son could not and did not. His experience with a fig-tree (Mark xi. 12), perhaps, is the best illustration of His two natures. " He was hungry, and, seeing a fig-tree afar off having leaves, He came, if haply He might find anything thereon, and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves." The event, no doubt, shows not only His want of omniscience, but seemingly His lack of average human observation, ' for the time of figs was not yet ' But He was a man, and He did what His fellow-men would have done when oppressed with hunger. Are we not prone to fall short of average human judgment when certain passions in us are aroused ? And therefore His showing anger against an inanimate thing like a tree which did not supply Him with figs to satisfy His hunger was nothing short of what we usually do when baffled in our expectation. But were they not necessary preliminaries, a Christian apologist would say, for the working of Divine glory which found its manifestation when the Lord was heard to say, " Let no man eat fruit of the hereafter for ever," and the tree withered for all

time. We know that there are other events recorded of Jesus in the New Testament which to many appear to be absolutely inconsistent with the universal conception of God, but the Divinity of Christ perhaps stands on a different base. It consists, it is urged, in the development and manifestation of certain Divine morals, which, finding their revelation in Him, place Him on the throne of His Father, rather than in the possession of those magnificent superhuman powers which befit the Almighty God.

GOD AND HIS IMAGE.

God is Impersonal, and man made after His image ! The moral attributes of the Divine image can come to their realisation only in one who is man as well as God. But was Jesus a complete epiphany of such morals ? If God is man's prototype, morals observable in the latter are those of the former. If moral forces are realities and can rule the whole universe, when properly balanced, did they meet their fullest development in the person of Jesus Christ ? Modesty, Meekness, and Patience undoubtedly are noble qualities in man which partake of the Divine nature, but do these passive tender qualities exhaust the long list of human morals ? Are there not other stern, active morals, noble as well, which are essential to constitute

humanity ? Bravery, Justice, Generosity and Trustworthiness among them ; and did Jesus get the occasions necessary for the manifestations of these morals ? Because, unless one gets a fitting opportunity for the exercise of a moral quality, a possible potentiality is no proof of actuality. God forbid that I stigmatise Jesus for being otherwise, but what I mean to say is that negative virtues are no virtues, especially in teachers of morality ; they cost nothing, and are no help to one who needs a specimen in practice

WORDS AND ACTIONS.

In judging the ethical side of one's character people make a serious mistake, which sometimes creeps imperceptibly even into the judgment of level-headed writers known otherwise for their impartial criticism. Words are accepted for actions, virtues preached to others in sermons and homilies are often believed to be actually owned by their teachers. But it is a mistake, and a serious one. No literature in any community is devoid of books on ethics. They contain golden rules of morality worthy of a prophet or a god in man ; but, if whatever is contained in them is to be accepted as an index to the moral character of their writers, our judgment on the moral side of Lord Bacon's character should be otherwise than it is. A teacher,

however highly divine his claims may be, should not be accredited with possessing all those moral attributes which he inculcates to others through his precepts, unless he, by his own example, has converted them into action. This truth was never so practically and lucidly hinted at us by the author of 'Anwar Suheli,' a famous book on morality in Persian literature, where all moral lessons which he intended to teach to his readers have been put into the mouths of birds and other dumb creatures. In fact, an ethical aphorism written on a wall is as good as in the mouth of a man if the latter has never been able to put it into practice. Besides, morals can be best brought home to others only through actions, and an example is, therefore, deemed always better than a precept.

CONDITIONS OF ACTUALITY.

No one can deny that every potentiality requires certain conditions to become an actuality, and a moral preached, and perhaps potentially possessed by one cannot be claimed as owned by him unless he brings it into practical shape under given conditions. It is through the splendid meekness with which He bears all the derision of the Israelites and His marvellous patience in the face of the hardest trials of life which He suffered as a martyr to the truth, that meekness, that forbearance and patience

become enviable possessions of the Lord Jesus, otherwise He would have been a mere tale-teller of passive morality. It is a real misfortune of the highest magnitude that the ministry of the Lord was curtailed by circumstances which He could not control, and the world lost the chance of seeing a practical manifestation of various divine moral qualities which possibly He possessed. Even the much-praised morals in Christian literature, like forgiveness, could not see their complete development at His hands. The said moral quality also, like others, requires given conditions, and unless they are present one cannot be fairly accredited with it. Three essential conditions must be fulfilled before you can claim to possess this noble attribute. In the first place, you must be persecuted ruthlessly by your enemies. Secondly, your enemies must fall, and change of circumstances render them at your mercy, and, last of all, though not the least in importance, in spite of your possessing the means to give them the punishment they justly deserve, your noble nature gets the better of you and you forgive them. Mercy, like forgiveness, can only be shown by one who finds others at his mercy, and unless one attains that high position, the preachings of mercy are words which lack reality. Besides, it is our everyday experience that people

in power generally regard forgiveness as an insult rather than as a kindness when it comes to them from a helpless victim of their persecution. It is deprecated and treated with contempt. Of course Jesus on the Cross prayed for forgiveness for His tormentors, and it shows that he was in that mood at the time, but sentiments and feelings expressed by Him while praying for His enemies on that occasion have also been given vent to by other great men under similar trials of life, and He is not unique in this respect. The moral quality of forgiveness, however, could not see its realisation in the lifetime of Jesus: one finds only the first of the three conditions precedent for the manifestation of forgiveness in His life, the other two are lacking. It remained in embryo for some six hundred years more and found its right use and occasion at the hand of the Prophet in Arabia, when the 'Lord on high with His 10,000 Saints' reached the gates of the 'ancient House' in the person of Muhammad. The old writings were fulfilled, and Mecca was conquered, without a single drop of human blood being shed, an event unparalleled in the whole history of the world. The enemies of the prophet in Mecca had subjected him and his followers for thirteen years to a long course of trials and hardships, which

surpassed in intensity and quantity the hardest trials in 'others' life. His enemies fell and found themselves at the absolute mercy of their persecuted victim. They deserved every imaginable punishment to be devised by human ingenuity, and to bring them to it was simply to meet the ends of Justice and Equity. Muhammad would have been quite justified if he had punished them as severely as Joshua, Ramachandra, and Krishna did when victorious over their enemies, but the great Divine moral attributes of Forgiveness which the Son of God Himself could not reveal in Himself, being hampered in His ministry by circumstances beyond His control, received its full revelation, which otherwise would have remained in abeyance, perhaps for ever. God raised various prophets from time to time, and His various characters were revealed in them. Muhammad was the last of the race, and all those divine moral attributes which were still undeveloped in man, and had had no occasion for proper manifestation in the lifetime of previous prophets, found their proper revelation in him. Forgiveness being one of them, had its own occasion as well as its use. It found no occasion in the lifetime of Jesus, and if others had it, they did not utilise it. But Muhammad had the rare opportunity and did not fail to use it. His enemies when

utterly fallen entreated him to treat them as a noble-minded person would do. The appeal was most opportune and made to the right man, and was readily accepted.

TENDERNESS AND STRENGTH.

This is what can be fairly said about the tender passive moral qualities which are chiefly claimed for Jesus, but there are stern moral qualities besides, which are also divine, but which, I am afraid, found no revelation in the Son of the Holy Virgin. These stern moral qualities when properly balanced secure happiness to human society, Anger, Hatred, and to them I may add Vengeance. They are all necessary to keep life and property secure. They cannot be branded as lower and bestial passions. They have their right use, and it is only through their degenerate use that they become so. Do we not observe them in the working of dumb nature, which, in my opinion, is the best index of Divine character? We read of them as attributes of God in the Biblical record. Besides, to say that they are undesirable is simply to find fault with the Supreme Wisdom who supplied man with these passions. Are not Hatred and Anger realities? Do they not affect the trend of human affairs? And if man is born after the image of God, and consequently all the moral qualities observable in him

are those of God, all these stern and active moral qualities must be divine moral attributes in man, and cannot be dispensed with. They no doubt require regulation and training, and it is in the life of a perfect man in whom God is claimed to have been revealed that we look for the right use of such passions. Is not a morality preached and taught in the Sermon on the Mount sufficient, if adopted, to destroy those stern moral qualities which I call, and are Divine, and to render our life and property insecure? The morality, I am afraid, is too sublime to be practised, and will, I believe, remain so till the day of Judgment. But can the teacher of the said Sermon under these conditions claim to be a perfect model of humanity and a complete representative of Divine character, and is His claim justified? I have purposely referred to these two passions, as they cannot exist if the said Sermon is brought into practice, though its Teacher Himself could not restrain Himself from making use of them sometimes; but there are innumerable moral attributes besides, human and divine, which, to take the most favourable view of the case, remained in abeyance and did not see their revaluation in the Nazarene prophet; and I see no reason therefore to say in the words of Renan that "religion cannot be said to

have made a bad choice in pitching on this Man (Jesus) as the ideal representative and guide of humanity." Renan, with all his rationalistic attainments, was not proof against his early predilections, otherwise he could not have deliberately made such a remark. He should have known that there were various walks of life most necessary for the superstructure of human society, and Christ could not be a guide there. A King on the throne, a Judge on the bench, a Statesman in his Cabinet, and a General in the field, are as necessary factors of human society as a teacher of morality, and God was also not unwise in raising patriarchs like David, Solomon, Joseph, and Joshua, who acted respectively as a King, a Judge, a Minister of State and a General. They were human beings, and possibly committed errors, nay, sins, as Christians believe, in the performance of such duties. But if God had to come as the "ideal representative and guide to humanity," He would have been more useful to human society if He had appeared as a king or a statesman. He could have left better rules for the guidance of Christian kings and statesmen in Europe, and the world would have seen a millenium when relieved of their ambition and self-assertion. His Holiness the Pope of Rome and King Emmanuel badly wanted a God in

the person of a General rather than in a "Prince of Peace" to guide them in their recent uncalled for campaigns. He could have taught them morals of war. Perhaps his precepts and actions in this respect might have proved a better check to Italian atrocities in Tripoli than the Ordinance of the Hague Conference.

THE SECOND ADVENT.

We are told that the Lord is to appear in the last days as King to do justice to the oppressed, and to set all iniquities right, but if the world is to end at the time of His second advent, our need of an 'ideal representative and guide to humanity' will also come to an end. It may be said perhaps that His Kingdom was not the Kingdom of this world, nor did He allow 'His servants to fight,' that He 'should not be delivered to the Jews.' (St. John xviii. 36.) But if the civic and economic policy of the world necessitates the existence of some kind of kingdom, and the enforcement of mutual rights and obligations between man and man, which is the only basis of a commonwealth, and which renders some sort of rule indispensable; and if no sooner man emerges out of the primitive state of nature than at once knowledge of individual property rushes to his mind, and its security, together with the safety of his own life, brings

home to him the necessity of some sovereign political authority, though in a rudimentary form ; and, last of all, if the policy of England converted the old Witenagemot into the modern Parliament, should we look to the Mount of Olives for an "Ideal representative and Guide of humanity," as Renan says, or to the Mount of Libanus to find a King, a Statesman, a Lawyer, and a General in the Person of the Prophet

A calm and unprejudiced consideration of these facts given in these pages will, I am sure, convince a student of Renan that his remark was not free from short-sightedness. Christ, as He Himself confessed, is no example in the higher walks of life, but will He be of help to us in our ordinary life ? Is not our domestic life an essential and important part of our programme in life ? Are not many houses in these days of ours scenes of unpleasantness, misery and discord ? And does not this deplorable plight result from the want of those sweet relations between husband and wife which make the matrimonial bond heavenly ? It is not the very word ' home ' a treasure of dearest and happiest associations, which are becoming extinct day by day ; was not woman created to be a ' help meet ' to man, and are they not meant to be husband and wife, on the happy

or unpleasant mutual relations between whom a home becomes a heaven or a hell ? If these are realities, and to a great extent responsible for our happiness or misery, are we not in urgent need of a Guide to regulate our domestic daily life ? It is a great misfortune that the divine element in Christ did not allow Him to have an earthly connection with some woman as husband and wife, and we are again constrained to turn our eyes to some other quarter for a "guide of humanity." Jesus, of course, had a mother, but His divinity again comes in the way, and a son in a Christian house has nothing to learn from Him in home morals. The Holy Virgin could with complacency of mind hear her Divine Son call her 'woman' because she saw something in Him different from her, but an ordinary English woman would like to see her son behave differently.

IS THE MORALITY OF JESUS PRACTICAL.

The deeper we go into the question the more doubtful we become as to the correctness of Renan's remark concerning Jesus Christ which we have quoted above. The Morality taught by Him in His famous Sermon on the Mount never found favour even with His immediate followers. Even now they are taken as the best specimen of morality taught in the world ; but the world has become two

housand years older since then, and still cannot see the way to bring them into practice. Even the devout members of the Church and the most zealous workers in modern evangelical campaigns find themselves unfit for the task and unable to work out these high principles of ethics, and are looking for the second advent of the Lord when the Kingdom of Heaven shall come to restore peace, amity, and love, and man becoming circumsised of all stern but otherwise manly passions, he will be in a more suitable disposition to act upon them. Some old Rishi even now in the Hymalayan icebergs in the East may appreciate them, but certainly no one in the West

The whole difficulty lies in realising His ministry and His real mission as a teacher of these rigid principles of morality. In my opinion, if Jesus be given His true position, it will be that which He Himself professes and claims, shorn of all the graceful Pauline coverings of Ecclesiastical dogma. He stands redeemed of His paradoxical situation, and the unpracticable nature of His teaching is explained. Here He seems to be in His right place. He was a prophet raised to reform the house of Israel, and to bring together its scattered sheep into one fold. He came to improve the morals of the Israelites and expose the hollowness of the knowledge of the Pharisees, who posed as the

only expounders of Mosaic law. The law was the law of retribution and vengeance. It was abused, and He came to explain it. He shows its proper application, and thus to fulfil it and not to destroy it.

To make myself more explicit in establishing the true position of the Prophet Jesus, I must first refer to the circumstances which were responsible for bringing the Law of Moses into existence. The children of bondage required emancipation, physically as well as morally. Through the bondage of many generations they had lost all manly morals and had become mean, dejected and cowardly. Crossing the Red Sea could liberate them from the yoke of Egyptian kings, but it could not free them from the thralldom of servile habits. The law of liberation, therefore, came to their rescue; "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," was the only code of life suited to redeem their enervated spirits. The said law accordingly worked well, and succeeded in turning children of bondage into a race of rulers and conquerors. Then came abuse. They forgot the spirit and began to worship the letter. They left the kernel and went after the husk. They insisted scrupulously on the literal observance of the Law of Vengeance, and in course of time they became a personification of vengeance. They had manifested slavish meekness

once, but now they became anger incarnate. Their hatred when aroused knew no bounds. Thus they fell morally, and with it came their worldly downfall. They were again humbled under a foreign yoke and began to pray for salvation. They needed a Redeemer, for whom they approached Jehovah through their patriarchs, and a Saviour was promised. The promised Messiah came, and brought them the true key of salvation, but they failed to understand His mission. Their previous history was a good lesson. They should have known that if their emancipation was in the law, the subsequent salvation should also follow the law. If the law of vengeance came to regenerate them when they were slaves to unmanly habits, and was a necessary preliminary to making them rulers and conquerors, the law of mercy was indispensable as well to redeem them from being victims of anger and hatred before they could be restored to their last supremacy. The Redeemer of the house of Israel not only diagnosed the real disease which had contaminated their national fabric, but also came with a panacea when he said "Ye have heard that it hath been said 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,' but I say unto you that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek turn to him thy other also. And if any man will

sue thee and take away thy coat let him have thy cloak, and if whosoever shall compel thee to go with him one mile, go with him twain. "

A NEW GOSPEL.

It may be impracticable as the world thinks, it may not be consonant with its polity and commonweal, but it brought a new Gospel to, and could save, those who had been slaves to hatred and anger. This law of mercy which was evolved on the Mount of Olives was the New Dispensation and not what has been dogmatically preached afterwards. Strong faith in it, and its practical observance, were sure to bring salvation to the scattered house, and not the blood of the teacher who became a martyr for it. But 'to hate thine enemy' was the watchword, and one who taught them, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you," could not be accepted by them as heir of the throne of David and restorer of their lost supremacy.

Jesus has been unfortunate in having foes as well as friends. No one could understand the Covenant He renewed. Both wanted a kingdom. The former when disappointed became His enemies and could not leave Him till they brought 'Him to the Cross'; the latter, more hopeful, looked to the last times for the moment when their sons shall

have an exalted position with Him on the throne, but no one appreciated His teaching. He Himself was a great believer in law and its observance. He believed that the world and its kingdoms must go to those who possessed high morals and knew how to control their passions. He knew that it lay much more by the cultivation and possession of certain characteristics that a nation can find supremacy over others than in the possession of military training and weapons of war. He knew that faith in and observance of certain laws only could create the character and morals desired. He knew the weak points of the Israelites, whom He came to raise, and the Law revealed to Him was the one evolved in His Sermon on the Mount. This was the New Dispensation, this was the New Covenant to redeem the lost house, to establish which He came to the Cross, and His martyrdom, as believed. In the renewed law lay their salvation. But His race rejected it, and fell, to rise no more.

CHRIST'S TEACHING

Unfortunately, as I remarked before, the position of Christ and the nature of His teaching, though clear to one not subject to any predilection, has always been a mystery even to His followers. Take Him as a Prophet, a Teacher and a Holy Messenger

of God raised to bring scattered sheep together and restore the house "under the wrath of God" to its lost supremacy, and therefore to teach them morals to meet the contingency of the time and place which He was in, the whole mystery is solved, and He commands all the respect and reverence which a human mind can feel for one of the greatest teachers of and martyrs to truth. But take Him as a God and you are beset with difficulties never to be surmounted. Read His teachings in the light of the facts explained above, and an Impracticability becomes a Possibility, or rather a Necessity suited to the requirements of the time and the people addressed. But to find in them some germs of Divinity simply because they cannot be practised by an average human being, and because the modern mind is too sordid to take them seriously, is simply to betray one's ignorance of an ordinary theory of legislation and its progress and evolution

II

CHRIST'S DIVINITY.

OF HIS two characters in representing Humanity and Divinity I think I have now discussed the human side of His character within necessary bounds, but much more is still to be said under the other heading. The world was not without its idea of God and His attributes before the advent of Christ.

It came either through Divine revelation or His work as revealed in Nature; and these indices of Divine character induced man to believe Him an Almighty God, Omnipotent, All-powerful, Conqueror and not to be conquered; Destroyer of the wicked, and Vanquisher of, and not to be vanquished by, His enemies. But it is a great shock to find in the Son of Mary something damaging to our deeply-rooted sublime notion of Divine dignity. A God in man, but caught and bound by the Jews, Lord of the Universe and evincing fear and anxiety to save His life, which it is believed He came voluntarily to sacrifice; He is smitten and abused; He is scurrilously subjected to coarse jokes and inhuman derisions, compelled reluctantly to drink the mortal "cup." Did He not try to hide Himself when He heard of the Jewish conspiracy against His life? It was perhaps owing to the human element in Him, but after the event called the Resurrection, He had overcome death and had got a "celestial life," He had no reason to evince fear and hide Himself again, but He did. This is what an Eastern mind unfortunately cannot conceive of God.

EXPLANATION OF CHRIST'S CHARACTER.

There is, however, an explanation to it. Patience is a Divine moral quality, and required manifestation, and got its full epiphany in the Lord.

I admit that God is patient. We see Divine meekness in allowing wickedness to take the uppermost hand; sin to become rampart and evil to prevail sometimes, but we see God vindicated in the final destruction of iniquity and unrighteousness. It is in the Light of this Divine victory that the former passiveness becomes a providential Patience and radiates with its full lustre, otherwise the suffering of every helpless creature is a Divine manifestation. This is what we read in the sacred literature of all the nations on the surface of the earth. This is what comes to redeem Druidism and even Paganism. Dumb nature even bears witness to the truth, where unhealthy matter sometimes finds luxuriant growth simply to be annihilated by the self-assertive cosmic energy. God showed His forbearance and patience, but was His indestructible nature and power of destroying others vindicated in the life of Christ? The world has seen many martyrs for the right cause besides Jesus. They suffered like Him and evinced similar patience. Was God revealed in them all? There ought to be some line of demarcation between a man as a man, and God as a man. It is rather in the destruction of His enemies by His own Hand than in His self-destruction, and that also expedited by the wicked enemies, that God is glori-

fied. Had His enemies seen their destruction at the hand of Jesus, the Glory of God would have seen redemption. Their subsequent annihilation, if any, proves nothing. The enemies of every martyr to truth besides Christ met the same fate. They could not survive for a long lifetime, and truth gained its supremacy in their discomfiture in almost every case. The Hindu philosopher has conceived a more dignified and a sublimer idea of Deity than a theologian in the West. If God took a human birth in the manger once, He was born more than half a dozen times in the Brahmanical soil, but under environments more befitting His Divine grandeur. It is the prevalence of sin, no doubt, which causes His appearance in every case, but He comes to destroy the wicked and the unrighteous, and establish His Kingdom in India, while in the street of Galilee He falls a helpless victim to them. Naturally, the first of the two is preferable and more consonant with His exalted position, but His possession of tender passive morality cannot be ignored. To my mind both His appearances, in India and in Bethlehem, are not free from defect. His complete epiphany would be in a case which combines all His moral attributes. He should appear at a time when sin is at its climax: He should come in a humble position like Jesus, He

should fight in the cause of truth like Krishna, and He should finally come over Victorious like Ramchandra. This is what is required of a God in man, and if it be possible that God reveals himself in man, it is Muhammad and not any other worthy member of the noble race of prophets who satisfies all these requirements,

GOD UNCHANGEABLE AND IMPARTIAL.

“The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works,” is as true to-day as it was when these holy words were sung more than 3,000 years ago by the ‘sacred Psalmist. The truth was not lacking its testimony even when ‘Adam delved and Eve span.’ Unchangeableness is one of the chief attributes of God, and He has always been Constant and Invariable in all His Providence. ‘The ethereal firmament on high,’ and ‘the earth with all her treasures’ beneath, were within the foreknowledge of the Creator for the benefit of the whole human race, even on the day when the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. The inexhaustible resources of nature are open to everyone, and have always been helpful to those who cared to work them out. God ‘opens His hand and satisfies the need of every one.’ His Providence has never been limited to any creed.

colour or age. If this be the broad Divine morality, observable in His Providence for the physical sustenance of mankind, are we not justified in holding a similar belief as to His Dispensation for our Spiritual growth? We are fortified in this belief, when we make a comparative study of the various religions that sprang up in different parts of the world, even in days when the means and facilities for mutual intercourse between them were not known. These religions of the world may diverge from each other in their tenets and doctrines, but they converge on one basic line. Every religion claims a Divine origin for its doctrines, though it may deny this privilege to the doctrines of all other religions. Divine revelation is the foundation of every religion. Confucius and Zoroaster, Buddha and Ramchandra, Krishna and Christ, Moses and Mohammad, everyone of the blessed race appeared when the conditions of time and place required a reformer. They found the world at its lowest moral ebb, and they came to raise it. They found their fellow-men in the bondage of sin, and they came for their redemption. But the salvation they brought to others did not consist in self-immolation, which even the holy founder of Christianity did his best to avoid, though they met with, or suffered more than, martyrdom in

their efforts as saviours of the human race. They brought a code of laws to regulate human life, which they claimed to have received from God. They inculcated certain truths which they declared had been revealed to them through Divine inspiration. They taught their followers to have strong faith in, and act upon them, and in that they saw the regeneration of the latter. In a word, they gave their fellowmen 'the law of the Lord'; and it was by the fulfilment of this that nations prospered like a tree planted by the river of water that bringeth forth fruit in season. As light follows darkness, and rain succeeds drought, whenever and wherever evil prevailed and man became corrupt, God sent, to use Jewish terminology, His 'sons and begottens' to teach man the 'Law of the Lord,' and to reconcile man to his Creator by keeping His Commandments. This is what history has so often repeated in every nation and creed. It gives us an insight into that particular phase of Divine Character, which unceasingly found its epiphany when sin became rampant and evil prevailed. Jehovah revealed Himself in the same way when he came for the emancipation of the house of Jacob. Moses brought the law, and in its fulfilment 'the Children of the bondage' found their real redemption. A generation of Patriarchs was raised after

Moses only to remind the Israelites of the law and its observance, and the last reformer of 'the fallen house' did the same when he said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matt. v. 18) Muhammad, the last of the Divine Messengers, brought the same message when he came to redeem the whole human race. He appeared at a time when sin was at its climax, Man had tramped down all Divine bounds, transgressed all the laws of the Lord. Virtue had become extinct, and evil ruled the whole world in its four corners. The race of Adam was again within the fangs of the old serpent; and 'no one called upon the Lord.' It was at the advent of Muhammad, and not some 600 years before, when 'the Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God'; but he finds that they are all gone aside, 'they are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good.' (Ps. 14.)

ISLAM, THE OLD COVENANT IN PERFECT FORM.

Gigantic as his message was, with the whole world before him to reform, Muhammad brought the old message, but in its perfect

form, and adopted for other's salvation, the same straight path, so frequently trodden before him by various sons and begottens of God—*viz.*, the prophets. He preached Islam, which means firm belief in and complete submission to the Law of God, and which most quickly redeems the world from the lowest ebbs of morality. Thus the whole sacred history of the world seems to uphold the same truth everywhere. Christ Himself was a staunch advocate of the Law and believed in its observance. The Covenant which he came to renew was the same old, simple Covenant of Moses, free from the innovations and mysteries which enshrouded His religion after Him, as He clearly said, and meant when he said. "Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of the least Commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whosoever shall keep and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven." To be great in the Kingdom of Heaven was vouchsafed by Christ to one who kept and taught the Commandments. But His church, based upon the Pauline superstructure, goes beyond the Master. It teaches what was never even suggested by Christ. It gives us an inkling into a novel characteristic of the Father, which He, as a Son, was not pleased to disclose. Nay, it

takes exception in a way, to the golden rule quoted above from the Sermon on the Mount

III

THE DEATH OF GOD CHANGES THE OLD ORDER.

Till the day of the Crucifixion we could be accepted as great in the Kingdom of Heaven by keeping and teaching the Commandments, but after the death of God the old *regime* changed, and the Divine dispensation saw an alteration. The old Covenant failed to work any longer, and keeping the Commandments was of no avail. The Great Omniscient, after an experience of thousands of years, came to realise that the Law thought by Him to be a blessing was after all a curse, as Paul averred: "For until the Law, sin was not in the world; sin is not imputed when there is no Law"; and, "We were sinners," says the Apostle to the Gentiles, "on account of Law, and were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." This beautiful piece of old Grecian sophistry which we read in Romans, Ch. v., hardly needs a comment, I will, however, discuss it later on.

GOD INCONSISTENT.

At present I simply point out that this new revelation of Divine character is absolutely inconsistent with the universal Providence of the Creator, which has always been, and ought to be, free from invidi-

ous distinctions between man and man. The new dispensation by blood was substituted for the dispensation by the Law, for the Law was given to Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Is not God good to all; and are not His tender mercies over all His works? If so, why was this grace and truth kept back for some 4,000 years or more before it found its epiphany in the manger. If being now justified by His blood we shall be saved from wrath through Him (Rom. v. 9). Were not the past generation of the house of Jacob under Divine wrath? Why were they not awarded the same justification? If God commandeth His love towards us, and Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, who died for the ungodly of ages past? Why did His love remain in embryo till then?

A RE-OCCURENCE OF THE CRUCIFIXION REQUIRED.

We read in the pages of nature that the existence of certain conditions invariably calls forth the manifestations of certain Divine Characteristics, and if self-immolation is a Divine attribute which finds revelation to reconcile enemies to God, and is a free gift, because grace abounds much more when sin abounds (Rom. Chap. v.), there ought to have been recurrences of Divine Self-destruction, as no generation of man has been free from sin. Man continued to sin, and death as the penalty, incessantly reigned ;

but the grace of God did not abound unto many in ante-Christian times. If sin entered into the world through Law, and death through sin, and if man was incapable by nature, according to Christian belief, to keep the Commandments, and consequently 'death reigned from Adam to Moses,' why was the Law suffered again to enter into the world through the gateway of Mount Sinai, and why was sin allowed to have dominion of the coming generation of the house of Israel by bringing them under the Law ?

St. Paul explains this in a half logical way. Abundance of grace, he says, could only follow abundance of sin. Law entered that offences might abound; and when sin abounded grace did much more abound. A very plausible explanation indeed, and a strange manifestation of a Divine Characteristic, which created sin through the agency of Law to reveal Grace, and to bring man to eternal condemnation to give proof of fatherly mercy.

SIN AN INDISPENSABLE AGENT TO BRING GRACE INTO ACTION.

Further, if abundance of sin was to fix the time when God was to appear in this new phase, the time selected for this epiphany was not appropriate. If history can be relied, the world had to wait for some 600 years more, as stated before, to find sin at its

climax. It was at the advent of Muhammed, and not at the birth of Jesus, that transgression and unrighteousness reached their zenith. That was the time when the appearance of the Lord was necessary. He did appear, but to kill, and not to be killed by His enemies. The Son was not equal to the task, He came and was killed by a generation of vipers: The Father himself had to come and crush the head of the old dragon.

THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD EXPLAINED.

Thus the prophecy made by Jesus in the parable of the vineyard was fulfilled. The husbandmen, who were no other than the Jews of the time, had already beaten and stoned various prophets, 'the servants of the Lord of the vineyard.' Then Jesus, the beloved Son of the Lord, came, but He was also 'caught and cast out of the vineyard.' At last the Lord destroyed the wicked house and His vineyard—i.e., the heritage of the prophets. He let unto other husbandmen, the descendants of Ismail, and 'the stone which the builders rejected became the head of the corner.'

ST. PAUL'S EXPLANATION UNTENABLE.

The explanation given by St. Paul does not, however, solve the problem under discussion, if faith in the dispensation by blood is an essential

element for man's salvation, what saved Moses and his descendants? But if Moses was reconciled by teaching and keeping the Commandments, why should not the same apply to others after the Crucifixion of the Lord? And if the immediate progeny of Moses is still in purgatory, why was the free gift of Grace grudged to them? It is urged that the house of Jacob also believed in the coming great sacrifice of the lamb; and much logic and eloquence which usually characterises the theological dissertations of the West is wasted on unravelling certain mysteries alleged to be contained in the otherwise plain reading of the Old Testament. I need not question the soundness of doing so, as millions of souls still remained beyond the pale of "the chosen sons of God," and the non-Israelite world was admittedly never initiated into such mysticism. They had no doubt received Divine Commandments through their respective prophets. They violated the law, but God never cared to enlighten them as to the coming Grace through which they could be reconciled to God. Even after the manifestations of this peculiar Divine character the other nations remained ignorant of the New Gospel for centuries. Even at the present day there are lands which are still untrodden by a missionary foot, and which know nothing of the New Message. The world-

evangelising campaign may conquer these places in course of time. It may or may not succeed in bringing them to the Lord, but many must be subjected to the European yoke by adopting the usual procedure : First, the missionary to prepare the way for the Consul, then the acquisition of commercial rights to furnish a plea for uncalled-for interference, followed by a sphere of political influence, resulting in annexation. But till then, what about the salvation of those ignorant of the New Dispensation ? They have, no doubt, Divine Commandments according to their own lights ; but man, it is said, is incapable of keeping the law, consequently they are sinners, and cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven without belief in the New Dispensation, which they have not even heard of. Why this invidious distinction in Divine Providence ? God is impartial and good to all. His mercies extend to all. If the old Covenant of law were similarly universal, why not the new Covenant of Grace ? The New Dispensation may or may not redeem mankind, but it makes God Himself unredeemed. By it He becomes changeable and fickle-minded, partial in His Providence and mercies. I admit that the adherents of pre-Islamic religions entertained some narrow-minded views which brought the Divine Dispensation

under the same stigma. They claimed a Divine origin for their own faith, but they denied this privilege to other creeds, as if God was not equally the God of other people.

PROVIDENCE REDEEMED.

It was a misconception of Divine Providence under which religious sects laboured for centuries, until the last Word dispelled this wrong notion of partial dispensation. Alkoran commences with the words :—*Al-hamd U-lillah-i Rabbil—a' lamin.*—All praises and glory is done to Allah (God), who is the Maker and Provider, not of one country or nation, but of all worlds, countries, and ages—equal to all in His providence, spiritual as well as physical. The opening verse of the Holy Koran refutes ; the doctrine which sets limits to the vast and unlimited Providence of God, and which reserves the manifestation of His attributes for a single people to the exclusion of all others, as if the latter were not the creation of God, or as if, after creating them, the Almighty God had utterly forgotten and neglected them as useless and futile things. "There was no nation but had its teachers and warners," says Alkoran. It repeats the same truth when it says that every nation had its guide, and refers to that impartial and universal dispensation of the Creator which gave law to every

nation, and opened the Gates of the Kingdom of Heaven to all, great or small, if they kept or taught the Commandments as admitted by Christ. But the Dispensation of Blood remained unrevealed for thousands of years ; and even when it was revealed, it was not brought to the knowledge of innumerable tribes and nations for centuries. Even, at present there are millions of descendants of 'one, that sinned ' to use Pauline language, but to them " is not 'the gift '—they are suffering under the judgment which was ' by one to condemnation, but to their misfortune the free gift is ' not ' of many offences unto justification "

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